

NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

3551-62

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15 September 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretary, USIB

SUBJECT : USIB Action on FIRE FLY Reconnaissance Capability

1. I have briefly reviewed the paper work on the FIRE FLY problem and concur with you that confusing is a polite word therefor. However, at the present time I don't believe that it is worth the major effort on the part of either USIB or the NRO to go back and try to straighten it out. Basically, NRO has not discussed the DCI's question as to the suitability of FIRE FLY as a reconnaissance system. However, Dr. Charyk does not feel in a position, based on present uncertainty as to vulnerability, to make a clear-cut statement on the desirability of its use against the Kamchatka Peninsula. It is possible that the intelligence community could clarify this by making a detailed evaluation of Soviet air defense capabilities against this vehicle which is the present gap in our knowledge. Such a study would be difficult and at best probably would result in an uncertain conclusion. I would recommend, therefore, at this time that one should leave this question in just about this status, i. e., that the survivability of FIRE FLY in the Kamchatka area is uncertain.

2. I do not have a copy of the proposed SNIE 2-4-62 at hand, but I believe it should be examined by ONE to determine whether it is still valid in light of the Sakhalin incident. In any case, I believe that a paragraph should be added which addresses itself to that situation

3. Pertinent to this entire problem is the recommendation of DIA that every effort be made to schedule forthcoming CORONA flights so as to obtain coverage of the Kamchatka Peninsula in



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the absence of cloud cover. COMOR has reviewed this situation and made recommendations thereto [redacted]

[redacted] It might be desirable for USIB either to note or approve these. In any case, they are being used as guidance for the forthcoming CORONA flights.

4. Insofar as USIB action is concerned, I would recommend the following:

(a) Endorsement by USIB of the COMOR requirement for FIRE FLY and forwarding of this to the NRO;

(b) Updating the SNIE as mentioned in paragraph 2 above providing this does not involve a major community effort;

(c) Note or approve the COMOR action on CORONA coverage of Kamchatka; and

(d) Address a note to the DNRO advising these actions and stating that in view of the uncertain survivability of FIRE FLY over Kamchatka and the forthcoming attempts to obtain CORONA coverage, USIB would not recommend to DNRO the carrying out of a FIRE FLY mission in this area at this time. This note could also suggest that NRO continue to monitor the FIRE FLY capability and consider its potential applications in other areas of the world such as Cuba.

[redacted]
HERBERT SCOVILLE, JR.
Deputy Director
(Research)

ODDR:hs [redacted] (15 September 1962)

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